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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [ELAB](#) [EG](#)
SUBJECT: EGYPTIAN STATE SECURITY COURT CONVICTS MAHALLA
PROTESTERS

REF: A. CAIRO 697
[1](#)B. CAIRO 715
[1](#)C. CAIRO 725

Classified By: Minister-Counselor for Economic and Political Affairs
William R. Stewart for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1.(SBU) On December 15, a State Security Court, acting under the authority of Egypt's decades old Emergency Law, convicted 22 people of crimes allegedly committed during violent protests in April 2008 in the Nile Delta manufacturing center of Mahalla al-Kobra (reftels). The court convicted the protesters of a variety of crimes including assaulting police officers, robbery and possession of unlicensed weapons. Those convicted received prison sentences of three to five years. According to local legal contacts, because the sentences were handed down by a state security court, the convictions may not be appealed, but those convicted can petition the Public Prosecutor for reduced sentences. Twenty-seven other defendants were acquitted.

2.(C) According to Karim Saber of the Land Center for Human Rights, a workers' rights NGO that has been active in Mahalla, the 22 convicted were neither organizers nor leaders of the demonstrations, but ordinary workers caught up in the violence. He said the sentences were harsh given the nature of the charges, but added that a number of those convicted had criminal records. Adel William Greis, another labor rights activists, told us that all defendants with backgrounds as political or labor activists were acquitted. Both Saber and Williams are concerned that the Public Prosecutor will bring additional charges against those acquitted.

3.(C) According to media reports, before announcing the verdicts, the judge presiding over the case made a statement attributing the Mahalla violence to unnamed "international forces." Saber and Greis told us that the judge's attempt to link the violence - which began as a labor strike - to "international forces" was especially noteworthy.

4.(S/NF) In August, DRL notified us that it was contemplating providing legal defense funds to three of the 49 Mahalla defendants through the Global Human Rights Defenders Fund. We reviewed a hand written list issued by the court of those convicted and acquitted and found no reference to the three; Essam Abed Al Raheem, Mohamed Abed Al Tawab Guma, or Karim Ahmed Omar. We will review any subsequent documents issued by the court to learn more about the fate of those the USG sought to assist.
SCOBAY